Fire Season in the East Region
This summer has presented a very active fire season in the East Region. At the time of this writing, 49 named fires have involved nearly 800,000 acres of forest, shrub, and grasslands east of the Cascade Mountains. The effects of these fires on wildlife varies greatly depending on the vegetation type, wildlife habitat type, future moisture conditions, patchiness of the burned area, and the nature (hot and destructive versus restorative) of the fires themselves.

Of particular concern are the fires which have burned in sage grouse habitat. Over 434,000 acres of sage grouse habitat (148,500 Core Area, 176,000 low density, and 109,500 other occupied habitats) have been burned. The largest fire to date has been the Buzzard complex which burned approximately 395,000 acres of sagebrush lands in Southeast Oregon during July. While most of the fire occurred in the southern half of the Malheur River Wildlife Management Unit (WMU), it also burned small portions of the Owyhee, Steens Mountain, and Whitehorse WMUs. Most significant of the impacts from the Buzzard is the loss of sage grouse habitat: 122,000 acres of sage grouse Core Area, 167,000 acres of low density habitat and 104,000 acres of other occupied habitats.

Other fires have burned on ODFW Wildlife Management Areas. The South Fork fire in the John Day country has burned over 61,000 acres of forest and scrubland. Over 11,000 acres of the Phillip Schneider Wildlife Area in the Murderers Creek WMU has been involved in the fire. This fire has disrupted access to early bighorn sheep hunters. Those hunters which have been affected by the fire are being accommodated with extended seasons and/or hunt areas. A small fire also threatened the White River Wildlife Management Area but was readily extinguished at less than 1000 acres in size.

Overall, the fires thus far likely only impacted bighorn sheep hunting opportunities in Grant County. It is not expected that big game hunting elsewhere will be curtailed by fires. As fire season winds down, East Region field staff will be working with land managers to provide technical support, equipment, and resources to aid in fire restoration activities.

Upland Bird Hunting Forecast
Across East Region expected hunting opportunities for upland game birds are variable but some overall trends are emerging. Pheasant numbers generally remain lower than the levels observed over ten years ago but there have been some slight increases in the Malheur, Umatilla, Union, and mid-Columbia areas. Hunters should find some increased young-of-the-year birds in those areas. Surveys in the Heppner country yielded the fewest pheasants counted since 1981. Hopefully hunting will yield more.

Throughout the southeast portion of the Region, chukar hunters during the past two seasons were finding low numbers of mostly adult birds due to poor brood production in 2012 and 2013. While overall numbers remain down from the previous 10 year average, biologists are finding good brood production which should yield much better hunting than in the past two years. In Malheur County chukar numbers are up over 135% from last year. One exception to the good news is the southern half of the Malheur River Wildlife Management Unit, which was burned in the Buzzard fire, where chick survival will likely be low.

Overall trends in quail numbers appear to be exhibiting a slight increase in most areas with relatively good brood production this year.

Finally, while forest grouse are more difficult to track, biologists are finding what appears to be an increase in numbers over last year.
WEST REGION  
Steven Marx, Acting Region Manager

Passage Restoration Project  
A high priority fish passage barrier replacement project was completed this week by Tillamook district fish staff in cooperation with several local partners. An undersized, perched culvert on Bear Creek (Mill Creek, Trask River basin) was removed, and an arch culvert installed. The project was a partnership between ODFW, Tillamook Bay Watershed Council, Tillamook County Road Department, and USFWS. Access to about three miles of habitat was restored.

Adenovirus Hemorrhagic Disease in Southwest Oregon Deer  
Wildlife staff in the Rogue and Umpqua watersheds has recorded a continuing outbreak of Adenovirus Hemorrhagic Disease in local deer populations. Symptoms include ulcers and abscesses in the mouth and throat. Acute symptoms include rapid or open mouth breathing, foaming or drooling at the mouth, diarrhea with blood, and copious amounts of fluid in the body cavity. The virus makes the blood vessels “leaky”, that’s what causes many of the signs. Death can occur within 3-5 days from the time the deer was exposed to the virus. Deer can drown from fluid in their lungs. Sporadic cases typically affect a few animals in local populations. However, it can cause large-scale disease outbreaks under the certain conditions.

The Rogue Watershed has recorded a minimum of 71 suspected or confirmed adenovirus infected dead or sick deer since June. An additional two dozen fawns have also died or have been euthanized from a local rehab facility. Roseburg staff continues to receive calls from the public about dead deer. To date, there have been approximately 63 deer reported. The majority of them are Columbian white-tailed deer of all ages. Four deer were sampled and sent to OSU Veterinary Diagnostic Lab last week. One result came back as a strong candidate for adenovirus but the tissue was too degraded for a definitive result. We are waiting to receive results from the other samples.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV)  
Staff has been in coordination with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to obtain their assistance in developing a UAV program to assist ODFW with fish and wildlife survey work. NOAA conducted several flights in Oregon last year, and will potentially survey again in Oregon this fall as part of a pilot program if adequate funding is obtained. The focus of the surveys would be Jewell Wildlife Area and/or Chinook survey flights on the Umpqua. Staff has also spoken with Oregon State University (OSU) in regards to their UAV work, and observed several of their survey flights. Potentially the Department could contract with OSU to have them assist with UAV use in fish and wildlife surveys. A graduate student at OSU is currently seeking a third component to his graduate project that utilizes UAV collected data. The other two are forest habitat related; Jewell Elk surveys may potentially work as the third component of his graduate work. As a third opportunity, staff has written a Restoration and Enhancement grant to purchase two UAV’s for Department use. The UAV’s would be used in fisheries surveys; specifically the Umpqua and Deschutes Chinook redd survey data collection. While this is still a developing technology, UAV’s have high potential for use by ODFW to complete fish and wildlife surveys in a safe and effective manner. More to come on this topic.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION  
Roger Fuhrman, Administrator

Running Wild at E.E. Wilson  
“A small stroke of brilliance” is how an editorial in the Albany Herald-Democrat described the “Running Wild” 5K and Outdoor Skills Challenge at E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area. The event included a 5K run/walk and offered participants the chance to try out trap shooting, casting and archery. More than 105 participants,
including several families, took part in the event which was organized by ODFW, Pheasants Forever and volunteers from both organizations.

There were two goals for the event – raise money for Governor’s Holiday Toy Drive and introduce a new audience to hunting and fishing. Both goals were met. The event raised more than $2,000 to purchase toys for children in need. Susan Canfield, 61, told the Corvallis Gazette-Times this was her first time using a shotgun. “I’ve always wanted to shoot a gun and this was a perfect opportunity. I got to have someone teach me how to do this and get some exercise and be outdoors and it was really fun,” she said. Canfield wasn’t alone. More than half of the participants had their first experience shooting an arrow, casting a spinner or firing a shotgun at the event.

The Albany Herald-Democrat editorial highlighted the national decline in the number of hunters and anglers and the importance of license sales to funding for wildlife management. “Instead of just moping about that trend”, the editorial said, ODFW is trying to do something about it by trying new approaches to recruit hunters and anglers. Outreach for the event included distributing fliers and running stores, fitness centers, Weight Watchers and posts on running blogs and websites with the goal of encouraging new reaching a new audience. It worked. One participant wrote afterwards that they were an “absolute newbie in most of the events, except the running part, and I had a great time! The volunteers at each station were very friendly and helpful. I hit the bulls eye in archery and actually hit the target in trap shooting! Thanks so much for putting this on. I hope you have it next year!”

Planning is underway for next year’s Running Wild event which some said will become “a new family tradition.”

Photo Contest Winners Announced
Oregonians enjoy the outdoors and they love to share photos of their adventure. ODFW received more than 240 entries in its second photo contest. The request was simple – send in your fishing, hunting, clamming, crabbing and wildlife viewing photos and ODFW will showcase them on the website, social media, publications, brochures, signs and other promotional materials. More than 240 photos were submitted and winners were named in five categories: fishing, hunting, crabbing, clamming, and wildlife viewing. Greg Yamada, Eugene, won the fishing category with a self-portrait titled “Fly-fishing the South Fork McKenzie River.” Yamada and the other winners received a $50 gift certificate from Cabela’s.

The winning photos and many runner ups can be viewed on the ODFW website at http://www.dfw.state.or.us/images/photo_submissions/july_contest/.

Trout 365
Survey after survey shows that trout fishing is the most popular activity with Oregon anglers and with good reason. Good trout fishing is available in every part of the state and unlike other fisheries, it is open year round. Trout anglers don’t necessarily have to wait for a specific spring weekend to start fishing. Chances are pretty good they can find someplace nearby to pursue rainbow, cutthroat, redband, brook or brown trout any time of the year.

The Trout 365 campaign will highlight the incredible trout fishing opportunities in Oregon. It will include information on fishing locations, the various types of trout in Oregon, different fishing techniques, and tips for being successful throughout the year. The campaign builds on already available “how-to” and “where-to” material, including the popular “50 Places to Fish Within 60 Minutes” brochures, Easy Angling Oregon, trout stocking schedule and maps, fishing forecasts, and the Weekly Recreation Report. New web content is being developed and the campaign will use posters, banners, stickers, news releases, social media and other tools to create excitement about trout fishing throughout the year.

The Trout 365 campaign will start with a soft launch at the Oregon State Fair. The portable aquarium, which is always a popular attraction, will be stocked with different species of trout. Although the State Fair traditionally marks the end of summer, it doesn’t mean the end of fishing season. Trout fishing will be available long after the carnival rides are over and school is back in session.
Bycatch Reduction Breakthrough
Oregon’s Pink Shrimp fishery has been certified as sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council since 2008. Part of the industry’s success in acquiring this certification was the collaborative partnership between ODFW and the pink shrimp industry in developing gear modifications that reduced bycatch. Since its initial certification, the fishery has faced the listing of one of its bycatch species – Eulachon smelt – as threatened, under the Endangered Species Act. This has increased the intensity of interest in fishing as cleanly as possible. The pink shrimp fishery research and management team (Bob Hannah and Steve Jones working with industry partners on sea trials), has found a new technique to reduce Eulachon smelt bycatch dramatically, beyond the success of the metal grid bycatch reduction device required in administrative rule.

The new technique? Lights. But not just any lights, anywhere. Lights installed on the bycatch reduction device (grid) increases bycatch. However, lights on the fishing line (along the bottom of the trawl net just above the seafloor) reduce bycatch by upwards of 90%, with insignificant loss of the targeted shrimp. The researchers believe the lights work by causing the fish to dive to the ocean floor, thereby escaping the net as it passes just overhead. Eulachon and other fish have sensitive vision and a scare response to visual stimuli (“opti-motor response”), while pink shrimp lack this response.

Perhaps the biggest benefit of this new technique is that in addition to reducing bycatch numbers, this technique excludes fish before the smelt even get into the net, so interaction with the net and related mortality is greatly reduced. In addition to drastically reducing Eulachon smelt bycatch, the lights decreased rockfish and flatfish bycatch by over 70% and 60%, respectively. The reduction in bycatch also significantly shortens the time that the vessel’s crew spends on sorting the fish from the shrimp catch, thus increasing the efficiency of the fishing operation.

We are seeing these preliminary results as a “home run”. The results are convincing enough that we are seeing pink shrimp fishermen purchasing and installing these lights coastwide, with consistent great success. The research field trials will be fully and rigorously analyzed this winter. For now, we are thrilled by both the positive economic and conservation impacts of the results. A true win-win thanks to effective collaboration between the industry and ODFW.

OREGON STATE POLICE
Captain Jeff Samuels, Fish & Wildlife Division

Fisheries
Trooper Ocheskey (The Dalles) responded to assist Inter-Tribe Tribal Police on a report of a disorderly subject at the Lone Pine In-lieu site. The subject was found to be in possession of several sockeye, an oversized sturgeon (estimated approx. 8’ long) and undersized sturgeon located in the back of the subject’s vehicle. The on-site investigation resulted in criminal charges for Unlawful Possession of Oversized Sturgeon, Unlawful Possession of Undersized Sturgeon and Unlawful Possession of Sockeye Salmon on a non-tribal member. The fish were seized for evidence. The subject was lodged at NORCOR for additional offenses related to the initial call by Inter-Tribe Tribal police.
Wildlife
Sr. Trooper Turnbo (McMinnville) responded to a farm in rural Polk County after the landowner had located a poached deer with about half of the meat taken. Investigation revealed an adjacent landowner's family members, from the State of Washington, had been in the area a few days prior. Sr. Trooper Turnbo contacted Officer Flowers of Washington Fish and Game who interviewed the two suspects near Tacoma, WA. The suspects admitted to shooting the deer late at night thinking it was a coyote. After finding out it was a deer they drug it over a fence and into a dry creek bed. They took the back half of the deer and left the rest to waste. Officer Flowers seized the remaining meat and the rifle. The subjects were charged with Taking Deer Closed Season and Waste of a Game Mammal.

Other
On August 14, 2014, Lincoln County District Attorney Michelle Branam was presented with the "2013 Wildlife Prosecutor of the Year Award", the seventh presentation for such, in front of her peers at the Oregon District Attorneys Association summer conference held in Bend. The award sponsored by the Oregon Sportsmen's Coalition, was presented by Captain Jeff Samuels, Oregon State Police (OSP) Fish and Wildlife Division Director, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife Malheur Watershed Manager Chip Dale, and Ty Stubblefield, Field Administrator for the Oregon Hunters Association. Through her hard work and partnership with area law enforcement, Ms. Branam has garnered a great deal of respect for her commitment to consistently prosecuting fish and wildlife crimes.

End of Field Reports for September 5, 2014